



## PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

on the Use of

MARIHUANA

IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

by Harry Chramoy Hermon, M.D.

*Dr. Hermon, the only psychiatrist in the United States licensed by the Federal Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs to research, prescribe, and import marijuana, was born in Poland 42 years ago: went to high school and medical school in the USSR: received his first medical diploma in Poland, 1951, and directed a Mental Health Clinic there. In 1954 he moved to Israel, where his father manages a Village for the Aged: there, as staff physician in a mental hospital, he introduced group therapy, and later became a neuropsychiatrist in the Israeli Defense Army, mostly evaluating the mental condition of soldiers. After additional psychoanalytic training, Dr. Hermon moved to the United States (1959) to become Senior Psychiatrist at Grafton State Hospital in Massachusetts.*

*By 1963, after a few years as staff physician in Texas hospitals, Dr. Hermon received his license to practice psychiatry in Texas, and went to New York for further studies, concentrating on problems of drug addiction and abuse. In 1966 he returned to Texas to enter private practice in Austin.*

*Besides being "a duly approved researcher under Class V of the Marihuana Tax Act," Dr. Hermon is a Consultant Guru to LeMar and the Primate of Texas in the Neo-American Church. He is preparing an elaborate research proposal to investigate the use of marijuana as an adjunct to psychotherapy, which, it should be noted, is an idea quite distinct from the use of marijuana as a "psychotomimetic."*

*The following paper, outlining his research ideas in detail, was presented at the SUNYAB "New Worlds" Drug Symposium, February 27, 1969.*

For the past several years I have been studying the psychedelic phenomena and their relationship to marijuana use in our culture. My interest dates back to 1954 when I was the head of a mental health center for the treatment of alcoholics. Ever since then, I have been amazed by the scarcity of people supposedly addicted to hashish in the population of mental hospitals.

They were considered to be weird, and treated as outlaws, usually being discharged from the hospitals after a few days with the notation "unimproved or unchanged due to lack of motivation." They were classified as having antisocial or asocial personality trait disorders, or just as plain psychopaths. For some reason, these patients were always treated harshly and with disrespect, without regard to national origin, color, religion, or geographical location. Their mental status on examination very seldom showed gross psychopathology in intellectual functioning; their emotional responses were appropriate to the expressed ideas. There were often among them people of superior intelligence and high artistic talents.

### MARIHUANA & LSD

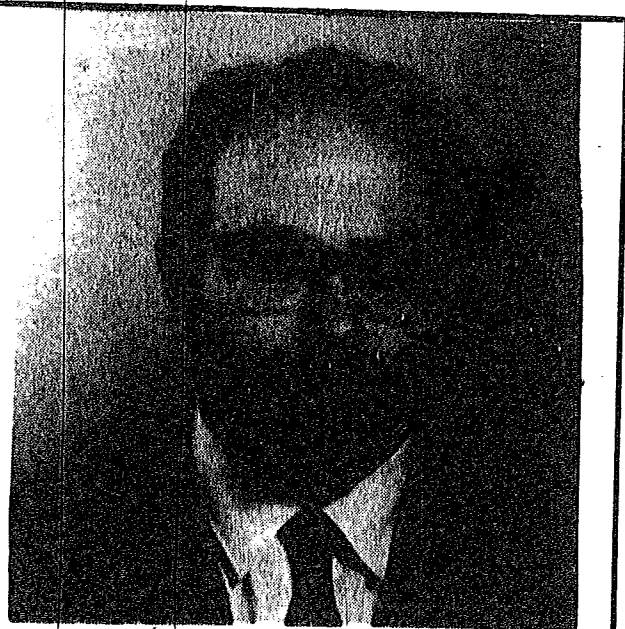
Marihuana is like LSD in that both are psychedelic drugs; marihuana is the milder drug, but it is also the most widely used all over the globe, dating back to the Stone Age. Marihuana can never produce such dramatic effects and profound changes in personality attitude, nor such miraculous cures, as can LSD, but in the long run the influence of marihuana and of a small amount of LSD are quite similar.

Interest in marihuana was revived with the development of the LSD hysteria in the spring of 1966. Our vivacious press was very eager and successful in bringing the attention of the whole world, young and old, to the dramatic and fantastic effects of LSD trips, quite over-

dramatizing the dangers and unfairly ignoring the benefits of this miraculous drug. The double bind created by propagation and seduction on the one hand, and threats on the other, created a situation in which the young and creative minds were seeking experimentation. In spite of, or because of, the hysterical propaganda, more and more scientists, scholars, philosophers, and deeply religious, highly ethical and moral individuals started to discover the truth about themselves and the world around them, under the influence of psychedelic agents. But, use of LSD was complicated by its unpredictability, lack of guides, lack of properly trained medical personnel, and of course because of its unique controversial and legal implications. So, people started to look for other psychedelics and discovered marihuana.

### PIPE DREAMS

It was noted that under the influence of marihuana one is able to dream while fully conscious, i.e. without distortion and symbol formation by our conscious censor. In other words, we are able to witness the primary process with all its purity and greatness. By means of a psychedelic agent the sediment accumulated in our brain through years of repressions, projections, reaction formations, etc., was washed away forever and one is able to see what one really is. This is the only psychotropic agent which pro-



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duces such fantastic and profound effects. When one stops to think about it one sees the tremendous potentialities and fantastic future of this discovery. The use of psychedelic agents, which is spreading all over the world, will change profoundly all our value systems, not only in the arts (as is already happening in the musical and visual arts), but also in creating a new generation of people extremely different from all former ones, which cannot communicate with older generations because their level of functioning is different from that of the new generation. With the increased use of marihuana the knowledge of its effects on our mind and body will in the near future become indispensable.

I always wondered about the relationship between the preferred intoxicant and the socio-economic cultural structure, and the influence of the preferred intoxicant on the way of life of the individual and vice versa. I never saw a pothead who became an alcoholic; to the contrary, I saw many alcoholics who gave up intensive drinking after they started to turn on with grass. Considering the relative safety of marihuana as compared with that of alcohol and nicotine, one can readily see that from a purely medical point of view, that of preventive medicine, the switching of some people from alcohol to cannabis might be life-saving. But the problem is much more involved; it brings in deep-rooted prejudices as well as medical and legal problems. The marihuana problem is a cultural civil war in which the traditional moral, ethical, and religious, conservative, conforming way of thinking clashes with the new, dynamic, global, expanded, planetary awareness. This is very unfortunate, because it prevents many people from profiting from the medicinal properties of this unique plant.

Cannabis sativa is truly unique. Its unique effect on humans is reflected mainly in its ability to produce tranquility and relief from pain, be it psychological or physical, without depression, while keeping the subject awake and consciously more aware. There is also the euphoriant component, which, together with the mind-expanding properties of cannabis, creates a most unique and mainly pleasant combination.

### PSYCHO-ADJUVANT

My main interest in Cannabis is as a psychoadjuvant or adjunct to psychotherapy, mainly the psychoanalytically-oriented psychotherapy which explores and delves into sub-conscious material usually not accessible to our waking, so-called "normal" awareness. The so-called "reality" in which most people usually function is only one of several levels potentially accessible to us. Another level is that of dreaming during so-called "sleep." Interpretation of the dream material is sometimes possible through hypnosis, narcoanalysis, or through different methods of sensory deprivation— and of course through the most spectacular way, through the proper use of some naturally occurring or synthetic compounds with psychedelic properties.

Marihuana belongs to that group of drugs which are

known as hallucinogenic, psychotomimetic, or psychedelic. The last term was coined by Dr. Humphry Osmond, and I have found it most appropriate because in the short or long run the main effect of marihuana is the expansion of the human mind into areas previously inaccessible to the normal, waking consciousness. Marihuana has been known for centuries as a drug which produces feelings of well-being and which alters the state of mind. The low toxicity of marihuana, its lack of addictive properties, mild tolerance, lack of detrimental physical effects, even after many years of use, will point it out as a drug to be used not only in a recreational way, but also as a good, potent, and specific medical drug, quite useful and versatile.

### THERAPEUTIC USES

Marihuana, relieving the pain of (and facilitating) natural childbirth and relieving the pain suffered by the terminal cancer patient, is useful also in the treatment of alcoholism, drug addiction, character disorders, obsessive-compulsive neurosis, and sexual deviations. It can be used as a euphoriant in states of thalamic dysfunction or depression, or as a tranquilizer in states of agitation. It can be used as an appetite stimulant and antibacterial agent; it is also quite effective in the treatment of many psychosomatic disorders, especially asthma, tension and migraine headaches, arthritis, menstrual cramps, sexual frigidity, premature ejaculation, impotence, and many other disorders when central nervous stimulation, with the diminution of anxiety and depression, is sought to alleviate the symptoms. But the most important factor is *stimulating and clarifying the thinking process, waking up the subject from the druggy, foggy, so-called normal awareness.*

Marihuana belongs to the group of psychedelic drugs called hallucinogenic or psychotomimetic because it is capable of producing hallucinations and mental disorganization which can be used in the exploration of the deeper psyche and as a psychotherapeutic agent. The purpose of this presentation is to introduce the concept of the use of marihuana as a psychoadjuvant or adjunct to psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy. Many of the phenomena described in the literature, and hundreds of observations I have made during the last several years of intensive study of the psychotropic effects of marihuana, have led me to believe that Cannabis is the best agent for this purpose. The state of intoxication is easily produced and is easy to control.

The method of ingestion can be by smoking a pipe or cigarette of about one-half gram weight of crude cannabis with a known content of about 10 milligrams of THC. This produces a state of mild intoxication in which the psychic defenses are lowered and the psychotherapeutic relationship is enhanced. Marihuana is known to produce social ability, feelings of empathy and openness, which in turn enhances the transference phenomenon. This is extremely useful in psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy.

### FREE ASSOCIATION

People under the influence of marihuana are gaining access to the unconscious regions of their minds, and through skillfully conducted psychoanalysis are able to recall repressed memories with incredible clarity accompanied by emotional catharsis, another factor quite important in psychotherapy. The abreaction enables one to work through deep-seated conflicts and free the individual from unconscious and incapacitating factors. The temporary intellectual disorganization, with the increasing flow of ideas and with the uninhibited flow of free associations, brings sometimes remarkable psychotherapeutic results. The phenomenon of regression that is usually present, anxiety and increased suggestibility— all could and should be therapeutically utilized. Most of the symptomatology appears to be of a central origin by possible interaction not only on the cortical level, but also with the limbic system and reticular formation as well.

Marihuana creates dreamlike states similar to the hypnogogic phenomena achieved by methods of sensory deprivation and for some closely resembling the reaction to a small amount of LSD. These states are transient physical phenomena which may be physically incapacitating but which are merely of a subjective nature, as they are a result of increased awareness due to an increased general sensitivity due to increased inner perception.

Marihuana possesses the unique ability to create a twilight state in which the waking state and the dream state are merging, thus allowing the individual to function on two levels simultaneously and to be able to look into his own dreams, not only to interpret them as by conventional psychoanalysis, *but to see and to be in his own*



*dream and to be able to see the level of defense formation while being fully awake.* This is the best way I know of for the individual to gain liferal insight into his own psyche. And this is a factor extremely beneficial for the patient and for the psychotherapeutic process.

### PSYCHEDELICOANALYSIS

All the phenomena which are taking place in LSD psycholytic therapy might also take place in marihuana psychotherapy, especially when the effects are enhanced with blindfolds, earphones, and other sensory deprivation devices which might bring the inner repressed conflicts and suppressed feelings up to the conscious level. Hypnosis might also facilitate and aid the marihuana psychotherapy, but I found this a rather weakening procedure and I would find it more beneficial to guide the patient through the process of analyzing himself, so that the therapist remains in the position of qualified guide, supporter, and sounding board with the hopefully proper interpretation of many symbolic phenomena.

During the psychedelic session with marihuana, the symbolism, and almost all parapsychological phenomena, flashing at times with the strong touch of reality, gives us a glimpse into possible research explorations in this area. The symbolism of classical Freudian theory comes to life in vivid complexes and conflicts intermingled with obvious Jungian archetypes and visible common unconscious.

The properly skilled psychedelic session with marihuana does not depend on the amount of the chemical involved; in a proper setting, especially on a convenient couch or in a suspended cradle or hammock, with a blindfold and muffling earphones, a state of sensory deprivation might easily be created in which minimal amounts of chemical psychedelic substances might be necessary. Some subjects are even known to recreate situations in which the psychedelic phenomena— even with the peak transcendental experiences— might easily take place without any drugs at all by recreating the situation or ringing a similar bell.

I found marihuana to be an excellent agent facilitating the psychedelic and transcendental experience as a facilitator of a psychotherapeutic process: not a panacea but a helpful tool under proper circumstances.

### CONTRAINDICATIONS

To generalize the notion of the usefulness of marihuana for everyone is as mistaken as to overemphasize the dangers of it. You must remain cool if the facts are to be straightened out. There are indications and contraindications for the use of marihuana in humans, because

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of individual sensitivities and the biochemical makeup of the brain structure. It has been noticed, for instance, that females show more thinking disorganization and intellectual impairments than males, and it has been noticed that this was not dose-to-body-weight related. Marihuana therapy might be contraindicated for individuals with a grossly hysterical personality structure and for borderline schizophrenics with underlying paranoid or self-destructive tendencies. Marihuana can bring out in these cases a psychotic reaction which sometimes might be beneficial when under proper supervision. The acute psychotic reaction from marihuana intoxication is characterized by the presence of insight which distinguishes it from the endogenous psychosis. It is possible that the individual going through a mild psychotic experience might become immunized against gross disorganization and real psychotic break-downs.

It has been noted that the "heads" are not getting as stoned as they used to, which may be due to development of tolerance and to the fact that some of them don't really ever come down long enough to give themselves a chance. The mild tolerance which is slowly developing is not interfering, however, with the ability to see through and into their own subconscious mechanisms or their own unconscious minds.

### SUMMARY:

### MARIHUANA IN PSYCHIATRY

Marihuana in psychiatry could be used as an emollient, facilitating the psychotherapeutic process by lowering the conscious censorship and allowing the unconscious conflicts to reappear in the instant "status nascendi" form. Psychedelic agents, in this case marihuana, serve as a powerful detergent, washing away the accumulated sediments of the conscious defense mechanisms and enabling us to see ourselves in the real virgin form. Psychedelic experiences used properly in psychoanalysis would allow us, with the proper technique, to gain a real insight into our unconscious mind. The consequences and implications are quite stimulating. The ability to see our unconscious while remaining on a conscious level, and being able to retain the memory of a conscious dream, are the unique advantages of psychedelic analysis, in comparison with other psychotherapeutic techniques.

The process which takes place during marihuana psychotherapy I call **psychedelicoanalysis**— a term designating analysis of a situation, of behavior, or of a personality problem, with the aid of a psychedelic agent. It is a form of psychoanalysis facilitated by means of a psychedelic agent.

A few days ago I received a letter from a friend of mine who stated that psychedelicoanalysis is something the whole world is going through. I hope he is right. I hope that we shall continue and that we shall overcome.

—Harry C. Hermon, M.D.  
Austin, Texas